BRITISH COLUMBIA

BC STATS Infoline

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July 11, 1997

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highlights

a weekly digest of recently released British Columbia statistics

Labour Force

- **The unemployment rate in British Columbia fell 0.3 percentage points in June, to 8.5% (seasonally adjusted).** BC's unemployment rate remained below the national average (9.1%), but was 2 percentage points higher than Alberta.

  The number of people employed (seasonally adjusted) in BC has grown 1.9%, or 34,000, from June 1996. In every province, employment increased. Manitoba (3.6%) had the highest percent change in the number of working people since the previous June. New Brunswick (0.8%) and Nova Scotia (0.9%) showed the least amount of change followed by British Columbia (1.9%).

  Source: Statistics Canada

Exports

- **British Columbia exports rose 15% in the first quarter of 1997 over the same period in 1996.** Lumber, which accounted for two-fifths of exports in the first quarter, posted a 25% increase. Japan took 36% of solid wood exports so far this year, up from 30% in 1996. Pulp and paper exports declined 18% in the first quarter, with newsprint suffering the greatest drop.

  Of manufactured goods, electrical, electronic and communications products posted significant increases, up 37% over the same period a year ago. Energy exports were the biggest winners, particularly natural gas exports to the US which rose 130%. *Source: BC STATS*

Small Business

- **First quarter 1997 figures show the number of self-employed persons in British Columbia has continued to grow and now represents one-fifth of the work force.** Since 1992 the number has increased 32% to 362,000. The fastest employment growth has been in small firms with between 20 and 49 employees. The growth rate in the first quarter of 1997 was twice that of larger firms (employing 50 or more people). *Source: BC STATS*

Income

- **The economic dependency ratio for British Columbia in 1995 was 24.82, a slight decline from 24.86 in the previous year**. For every $100 of employment income earned, $24.82 was received in transfer payments. Pension plans make up the largest share of BC transfer payments at 65.2%. Private pension plans, contribute the greatest amount at 27.8%, while the reliance on government plans are split almost equally between Old Age Security (18.6%) and Canada/Quebec Pension Plan (18.7%). Social Assistance (11.4%) and Unemployment Insurance (11.2%) make up the next largest groups of transfer payments. *Source: Statistics Canada*

- **Victoria's economic dependency ratio is the third highest in Canada**. Dependency ratios are calculated by dividing the amount of transfer payments by the amount of employment income. For every $100 of employment income, Victorians receive $33.15 in transfer payments, Vancouver residents receive by comparison $20.18. Tax filers in St. Catharines-Niagara had the highest dependency

Did you know...?
Psychological well-being tends to increase the most between the ages of 45 to 64.

ratio ($36.21), while Calgarians received the least ($15.16). *Source: Statistics Canada*

Tourism

- **Seasonally adjusted room revenue rebounded in British Columbia rising 3.5% between January and February.** The strongest growth was in Thompson/Okanagan (7.7%), and Northeast (7.5%). The Vancouver Island/Coast and Cariboo regions saw a slight decrease in room revenue. *Source: BC STATS*

- **During the first quarter of 1996 British Columbians made 3.2 million trips within Canada, a decline of 13% from the first quarter of 1994.** All provinces with the exception of PEI and Nova Scotia recorded a reduction in domestic trips by province of origin.
Source: Statistics Canada

- **For Canadian travellers the preferred method of transportation was the airplane, with a 19% increase from the first quarter of 1994 to 1996.** In general, Canadians travelling by airplane tend to take longer trips, spend more on accommodation and public transportation. A decrease in the average ticket price for domestic flights provides a partial explanation of increased air travel.

  In 1996, Mexico remained the destination of choice for Canadian winter travellers, followed by Cuba and the Dominican Republic. Increasingly the Caribbean is finding more favour. The number of trips to Cuba doubled from 1994 to 1996, and spending increased to $110 million. More Canadians travelled outside the country and spent more money than ever on overseas travel. Moreover, the number of flights increased 15% for overseas travel and 4% for visits to the US. *Source: Statistics Canada*

Housing

- **New house prices continue to decline in May 1997, with Vancouver prices falling 2.0% and Victoria 3.8 % over last year.** Ontario cities, by contrast, all reported price increases (Toronto at 2.4%). Calgary led the country with an increase of 7.0%. *Source: Statistics Canada*

- **Housing starts in urban British Columbia in the first half of 1997 were up 3.7% over the same period in 1996.** The largest increases were in Abbotsford, up almost 20%, followed by metropolitan Victoria at just over 10%. Victoria and Kelowna showed strong increases in single-family construction, while Vancouver and Abbotsford recorded declines. *Source: CMHC*

- **British Columbia homeowners spent $1.6 billion on repairs and renovations to their homes in 1996, a 15% decline over 1995.** Sixty-two percent of all homeowners reported spending money renovating their houses. Close to 50% purchased materials to do the work themselves. More than a third of homeowners paid to have a contractor do work. Painting was the most popular maintenance expenditure, reported by 31% of homeowners, who spent on average $355. Complete re-roofing, although reported by only 5% of respondents, cost the average homeowner $3,234. *Source: Statistics Canada*

Low Income

- **The income of 2.8% of British Columbians improved sufficiently between 1993 and 1994 to lift them above the poverty line, but 4.1% slipped into poverty in 1994, according to a new study by Statistics Canada that has been tracking the lives of families since 1993.** The first data release based on the study shows that 14.4% of British Columbians had low incomes in 1993 or 1994. About half (7.5%) were below the poverty line in both years.

  National results indicate that children and women are the most likely to stay in low income circumstances: 13% of children under 6 remained in the low income category in both years, compared to 9% of individuals of all ages. Ten percent of older women (65+ years of age), compared with 2% of men of the same age stayed in the low income group. Changes in family make-up seemed to be a significant factor for persons moving in and out of low income circumstances. *Source: Statistics Canada*

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For data originating from Statistics Canada: data sourced to 'Statistics Canada' has been retrieved from CANSIM, the agency's electronic database; otherwise the source is identified as 'SC' plus the publication name or catalogue number.

Infoline Report:

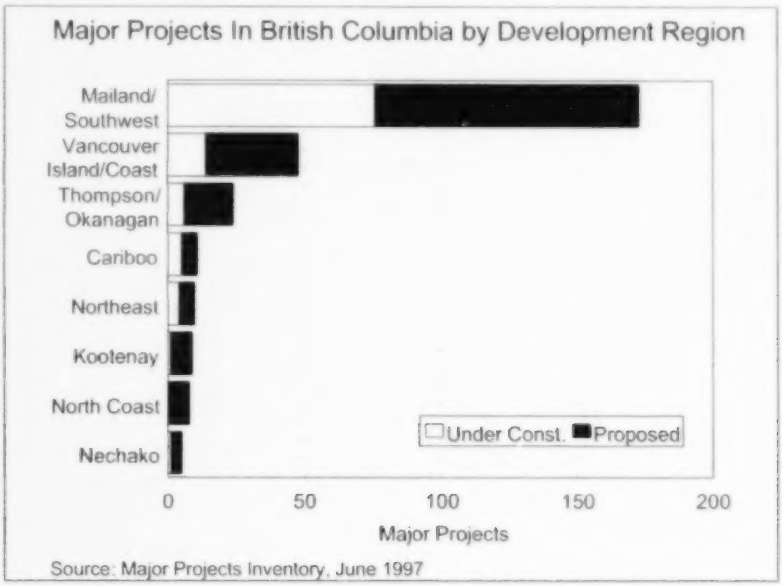
July 11, 1997

Major Projects in British Columbia

Major Projects Inventory, a quarterly published in partnership with the private sector is available by annual subscription for $75 plus GST. Individual copies are $25 plus GST.

According to the latest issue of the British Columbia *Major Projects Inventory*,[1] there are currently 107 major projects under construction in British Columbia, and another 181 proposals for further projects are being considered.[2] For the purposes of the inventory, a major project is defined as a project costing $20 million or more in the Greater Vancouver Regional District and $15 million or more in all other parts of the province. Some smaller projects with particular regional significance may be included as well.

Figure 1



Regionally, the Mainland/ Southwest Development Region has by far the greatest amount of projects, both under construction and in the proposal stage. The amount of projects mirrors the concentration of population to some extent, with the Vancouver Island/Coast and Thompson/Okanagan second and third respectively with regard to construction activity, and the other regions with more sporadic activity, at least with respect to major projects as defined here.

The types of projects differ significantly by region and reflect the nature of the regions themselves. For example, in the Northeast Development Region, most of the projects are related to the oil and gas industry, reflecting the importance of that industry to the region. The Kootenay region has several projects related to energy production, such as dams and power plants. In the Nechako and North Coast regions, mining projects comprise the majority of the major projects either underway or being considered. The Cariboo region also has some mining projects, but undertakings related to the forest industry make up the bulk of major projects in the area. In general, for these regions outside the main population centres, the major projects are mostly centred around natural resource industries, such as mining, forestry and energy production. While the other regions also have some natural resource-based projects, they are dwarfed in number by other projects related to things like condominium developments, tourist facilities, and projects related to servicing larger populations (such as sewage treatment plants, arenas, highways, etc.). The Mainland/Southwest Development Region, in particular, is experiencing a great deal of activity in residential construction. This reflects the rapid population growth the region has been experiencing

[1] Jackie Hamilton & Associates (1997), *Major Projects Inventory* (quarterly publication), BC Stats, Province of British Columbia.

[2] Note that information for this publication is derived from many sources and, as a result, it may not include all major projects within the province.

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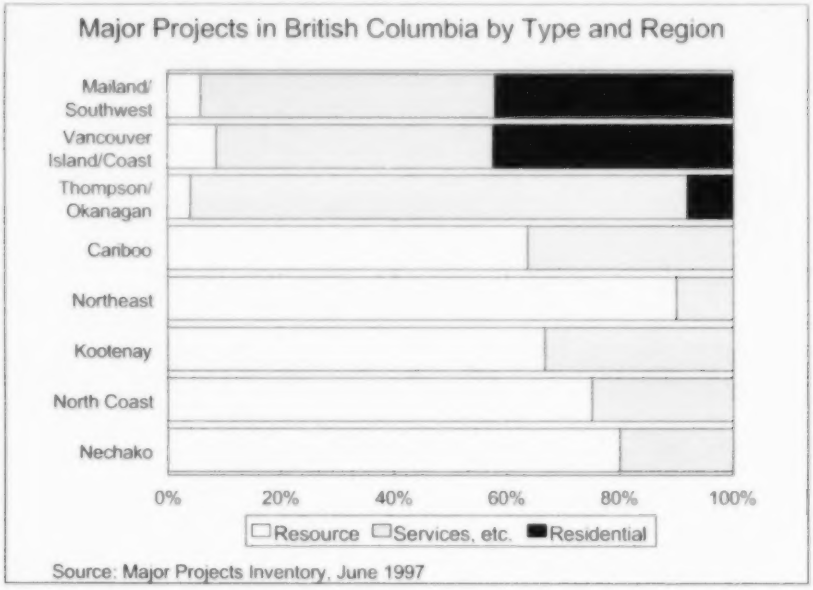
in recent years. More people create not only the need for more housing, but for schools, shopping malls, transit, and hospitals as well.

Figure 2



The projects outlined in the *Major Projects Inventory* (MPI) represent billions of dollars of investment in the province and the large numbers involved echo the rapid population growth occurring in British Columbia. The construction activity in the three most populous development regions (Mainland/Southwest, Vancouver Island/Coast, Thompson/Okanagan) seem to be driven by the population growth, but for the other regions, the opposite may be true. In other words, where a major mine or mill is being constructed, jobs will be created, and where there are jobs, people will follow. In this sense, projects listed in the MPI not only reflect where growth is occurring, but where growth may occur.

■

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BC at a glance . . .

POPULATION (thousands)	Apr 1/97	% change on year ago
BC	3,915.9	2.2
Canada	30,202.9	1.1
GROSS DOMESTIC PRODUCT		% change
(BC - at market prices - $ millions)	1996	on year ago
Current Dollars	103,631	1.7
Constant (1986) Dollars	74,001	1.0
TRADE ($ millions)		
Manufacturing Shipments (seas. adj.) Apr	2,950	12.9
Merchandise Exports (raw) Apr	2,247	10.9
Retail Sales (seasonally adjusted) Apr	2,685	3.5
CONSUMER PRICE INDEX		% change
(all items - 1986=100)	May '97	on year ago
BC	139.9	0.9
Canada	137.7	1.5
LABOUR FORCE (thousands)		% change
(seasonally adjusted)	Jun '97	on year ago
Labour Force - BC	2,002	1.5
Employed - BC	1,831	1.9
Unemployed - BC	170	-2.7
		Jun '96
Unemployment Rate - BC *(percent)*	8.5	8.9
Unemployment Rate - Canada *(percent)*	9.1	10.0
INTEREST RATES (percent)	Jul 9/97	Jul 10/96
Prime Business Rate	4.75	6.50
Conventional Mortgages - 1 year	5.20	6.50
- 5 year	7.00	8.50
US/CANADA EXCHANGE RATE	Jul 9/97	Jul 10/96
(avg. noon spot rate) Cdn $	1.3728	1.3689
US $ *(reciprocal of above rate)*	0.7284	0.7305
AVERAGE WEEKLY EARNINGS		% change
(industrial aggregate - dollars)	Apr '97	on year ago
BC	607.62	2.0
Canada	598.22	3.9

SOURCES:
Gross Domestic Product: Statistics Canada, revised by BC STATS
Population, Trade, Prices, Labour Force, Earnings: Statistics Canada
Interest Rates, Exchange Rates: Bank of Canada Weekly Financial Statistics

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- Tourism Room Revenue, February 1997
- Exports (BC Origin) 1988-'96, [revised '96 data]

Next week

- Labour Force Statistics, June 1997
- Major Projects Inventory, Second Quarter 1997
- Earnings and Employment Trends, April 1997
- Tourism Room Revenue, March 1997
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